

## Message Text

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17

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07

L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

SAM-01 SAJ-01 NEA-09 /078 W  
----- 089805

R 281450Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7990

INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY VIENNA

US MISSION GENEVA 261

AMCONSUL MUNICH

C O N F I D E N T I A L PRAGUE 976

GENEVA FOR AMBASSADOR SHERER

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CZ, (DUBCEK, ALEXANDER)

SUBJECT: THE HUSAK CAMPAIGN AGAINST DUBCEK

REF: PRAGUE 900

1. SINCE THE APRIL 24 CENTRAL COMMITTEE PLENUM DID NOT SHED  
ANY LIGHT ON THE TIMING OF HUSAK'S ONSLAUGHT AGAINST DUBCEK,  
DIPLOMATS HERE ARE STILL LOOKING HARD FOR CLUES AND FINDING  
FEW. FROM CZECH AND DIPLOMATIC SOURCES, WE HAVE PUT TOGETHER  
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ONE PLAUSIBLE EXPLANATION, WHICH MAY AT LEAST HAVE SOME

HUERISTIC VALUE.

2. THIS IS THAT HUSAK HAS CONTINUED TO HOLD TO HIS POSITION OF MODERATION TOWARDS THE MEN OF 1968 -- NOT THE TOP LEADERS LIKE DUBCEK, PERHAPS, BUT THE HALF MILLION EXCLUDED FROM THE PARTY AFTERWARDS. HUSAK HAS BEEN MOVING TOWARDS SOME KIND OF LIBERALIZATION MEASURES, AND THESE HAVE BEEN WIDELY RUMORED AMONG CERTAIN CIRCLES HERE, LEADING TO EXPECTATIONS THAT THIS SPRING, PROBABLY IN CONNECTION WITH THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS, THERE WOULD BE SOME KIND OF AMNESTY OR LIBERALIZATION. (THE DEPARTMENT WILL RECALL THAT PAVEL KOHOUT AND OTHERS WERE SAYING EARLIER THIS YEAR THAT THEY WERE NOT LEAVING THE COUNTRY BECAUSE THEY THOUGHT SOMETHING BIG WAS IN THE WORKS.) HUSAK DID NOT GET ALL HE WANTED IN THIS RESPECT AT THE CC PLENUMS IN NOVEMBER 1974 AND FOLLOWING, AND THE PUBLICATION ABROAD OF A SERIES OF DOCUMENTS CONNECTED WITH 1968 MADE HIS POSITION HARDER. FINALLY, ON THE EVE OF THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY AND -- ACCORDING TO HIS EXPLANATION -- HUSAK'S MOVE TOWARDS LIBERALIZATION, THE SPLASHY APPEARANCE IN THE WEST OF THE DUBCEK LETTER, WITH COMMENTARY BY THE SWEDISH PRIME MINISTER, MADE HUSAK LOOK FOOLISH AND MISTAKEN AND GAVE HIS OPPONENTS GOOD GROUND ON WHICH TO ATTACK HIM. HE QUICKLY MOVED TO SEIZE THAT GROUND BEFORE THEY COULD ATTACK. (BILAK'S ABSENCE IN SYRIA ON HIS POSTPONED TRIP MAY HAVE A CONNECTION HERE.) THIS EXPLAINS THE VIGOR AND EMOTION WITH WHICH HUSAK LAUNCHED THE ATTACK ON DUBCEK. END THEORY.

3. THIS EXPLANATION MUST HAVE AT LEAST SOME ELEMENTS OF TRUTH. (SOME OF THE OLD MOSCOW HANDS HERE HAVE BEEN REMINDED OF OCCASIONAL KHRUSHCHEV PERFORMANCES IN HIS LATTER YEARS OF LEADERSHIP, WHEN HE BOMBASTICALLY ASSUMED CERTAIN POSITIONS NOT FROM CONVICTION BUT TO KEEP HIS RIVALS FROM ASSUMING THEM.) IF WE DO ASSUME THAT HUSAK WAS OPERATING FROM A DEFENSIVE POSITION, THIS DOES NOT NECESSARILY MEAN THAT HIS POSITION IS WEAK OR EVEN MUCH WEAKENED; HE MAY WIN THIS CAMPAIGN AND COME OUT AHEAD IN THE INTERNAL COMPETITION FOR POSITION. SOME OBSERVERS POINT OUT THAT IN THE CONTEXT OF DETENTE, THE EUROPEAN SECURITY CONFERENCE AND SO ON, HUSAK IS NOT HELPING THE EASTERN CAUSE. WE SUSPECT, HOWEVER, THAT AS USUAL THE SOVIETS HAVE THEIR PRIORITIES CLEARLY IN MIND, CONFIDENTIAL

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AND THEIR TOP PRIORITY IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA IS FOR HUSAK (AIDED BY 70,000 SOVIET TROOPS) TO KEEP THE SITUATION IN HAND AND AS PART OF THIS TASK TO PREVENT ANY BACKSLIDING TOWARDS THE MOOD OF 1968. IF HE HAS THE RUSSIANS CONVINCED THAT HE IS DOING THIS (AND IF THE RUMORED BREZHNEV VISIT OF MAY 5 EVENTUATES THIS WOULD GIVE HIM A FIRST-HAND CHANCE TO TELL), PRESUMABLY THEY CAN LIVE WITH CERTAIN NEGATIVE ELEMENTS IN HIS CURRENT POLICY. WE HAVE A LINGERING SUSPICION, HOWEVER,

THAT MANY SOVIET LEADERS -- AND MANY OTHER COMMUNISTS, NO DOUBT INCLUDING HUSAK -- ARE NOT AT ALL HAPPY ABOUT THIS STARTLING REMINDER OF WHAT A LIVE ISSUE 1968 STILL IS. SURELY THE MATTERS AT ISSUE WERE CRUCIAL ONES, FOR HUSAK TO DO WHAT HE DID.

4. MEANWHILE THE USUAL SIGNS THAT GO WITH ANY COMMUNIST TIGHTENING-UP ARE IN EVIDENCE: MORE POLICE ON THE STREETS AT TIMES, INCREASED SURVEILLANCE OF ALL EMBASSY PERSONNEL, MORE INTEROGATION OF CZECHS IN TOUCH WITH FOREIGNERS. THE COMMENT OF ONE CULTIVATED CZECH -- A MAN WHO SERVED HIS TIME IN THE MINES, AND KNOWS WHAT THE BAD TIMES MEAN -- AT DINNER LAST WEEK WAS : "WHEN THE COMMUNISTS FIGHT THE COMMUNISTS LIKE THIS, IT IS ONLY THE POLICE WHO WIN, AND IT IS ALL THE REST OF US WHO WILL SUFFER."  
PERRY

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